



40 YEARS OF RUNNING ON THE SAME SPOT: A LIBYAN DIARY (PART I)

Hadia Gana

1 November 2011

INTRODUCTION

In June of 2011, following on from the launch of Ibraaz Platform 001, we entered into a conversation with Christine Wagner, a consultant with the non-governmental organisation HIVOS (the Humanist Institute for Development Cooperation) who had travelled throughout Libya for over a decade researching its artistic and cultural scene. We learned from Christine that she had a friend in Libya, who would remain nameless, who was writing a diary of the civil war there - and that perhaps Ibraaz could publish it.

Ibraaz decided there and then that this was too good an opportunity to miss and agreed that this diary would be published as soon as it was in our possession. What we received was a remarkably candid document whose voice was at times fearful, concerned, courageous, resigned, anxious and, occasionally, slightly amused by events as they unfolded - humour being one of the few ways to off-set the horror of what was unfolding across Libyan cities. Days are spent scrutinising the news for some sense of what is actually happening. What news that does get through largely follows the advance of the 'boys' - the rebel, anti-Gaddafi forces - as they take on the might of Gaddafi's war machine and his mercenaries. Another preoccupation is the NATO bombing of Gaddafi's troops and the targets hit by the coalition forces. At times the diary details the macabre brutality of what was happening and its description of Libyan hospitals at the time should be remembered when it is time for justice to be visited on those who perpetuated such atrocities.

The insanity of the situation brought about by the underlings and lickspittles who toadied to a demented despot, often under the influence of drugs and alcohol, can be read in these pages where the surreal is mixed with an all too fatal reality. However, by the time we edited and returned the script to its writer - Internet and power were precarious affairs in Libyan cities during those troubling times - we received a note from Christine Wagner to the effect that the author, and her family, rightly fearing retribution, still considered the situation too dangerous to publish the diary.

At that point, in mid-August, Ibraaz reluctantly shelved its plans to publish the diary - this could be, after all, a matter of life or death for some and it was still difficult to gauge Gaddafi's reach in a country he had effectively cowed into not-too-subtle forms of self-censorship. Needless to say, things changed again over August and, with Gaddafi on the run, we were back to receiving updates from the diary's author and even found out her identity: Hadia Gana, a Libyan artist and ceramicist. Closer to the deadline, in another twist of



fate, Gaddafi was caught and apparently executed. The nature of this dictator's death was not pretty. Having found himself at the wrong end of a rebel-led insurgency, Gaddafi was not only summarily dispatched but his body was displayed in a cold-storage unit in Misrata for all to view. Perhaps this was the way it was meant to end: not so much with a bang but with a whimper. But these images were nevertheless disturbing, not so much for their content per se but for the way in which the international media played and replayed them with relish.

The vicariousness of those images made us look again at the images of Gaddafi that are part of this diary and in a newer context: namely, the grisly death of the dictator. We found our images tame in comparison and, being animated, approachable for a wider audience and therefore in keeping with Ibraaz's ethos.

The diary, and accompanying images, covers a critical period of conflict in Libya from March of this year up to the recent death of Muammar Gaddafi. It therefore offers a unique perspective into the unrest there whilst charting the day-to-day hopes of the Libyan people as they struggle to rebuild a country that has been eviscerated by four decades of profound neglect, isolation and fear. On the day after NATO ceased its mission in Libya and handed over day-to-day control to the Interim National Transitional Council, Ibraaz is proud to publish Hadia Gana's diary for its readers and we would like to especially thank Christine Wagner for her work on facilitating its publication and, of course, Hadia for doggedly pursuing, with tenacity and insight, the writing of this diary.

In the months that follow, Hadia will be keeping readers of Ibraaz up to date with further developments and we would hope to look at the question of how culture develops in post-conflict Libya and the emergence of a civil society there.

Anthony Downey

40 YEARS OF RUNNING ON THE SAME SPOT: A LIBYAN DIARY

21 March, Monday

We don't really hear any bombing today, and I find myself envying the ones living in the city centre who call me every time they hear something, telling me that it's raining or hailing or that there are fireworks or a party, or a wedding ceremony - all so as not say it properly, as if the ones spying on our phones can't understand! This self-filtering is so anchored in us that we do it even if it's useless. So we joke about it.

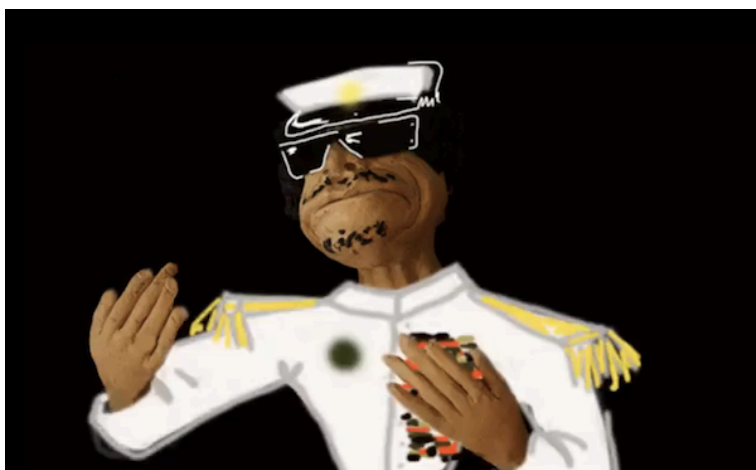
8 April, Friday

Fridays pass even quieter than the normal days. Unlike other Arab or Muslim countries, no one goes to the mosques to pray or group together. The occasion to meet and possibly start a march was erased a few Fridays ago by Gaddafi. A joke is doing the rounds, saying that 'when Gaddafi heard that the riots took place after the Friday prayer in Tunisia and Egypt, he decided to erase Friday from the calendar'.



15 April, Friday

Another oppressive Friday. Since yesterday, Gaddafi's forces are everywhere in the city and check-points are at every corner, even in our back street. The city is completely squeezed, snipers are everywhere and loyalist forces are in front of all mosques. Our Moufti, Sheikh Al-Gheriani, called for resistance again. Yes, we know we have to resist but how? Standing in groups is forbidden, flying the independence flag is forbidden, talking about independence is forbidden - people have been arrested for listening to the free radio or watching Al-Jazeera and for having anything related to independence on their mobile phones. Still, some small groups managed to come out.



Hadia Gana, *Removal*, 2011, still from video. Courtesy of the artist.

23 April, Saturday

A noisy sunset. NATO is having fun and to cover up, the greens (that is, Gaddafi's revolutionary committees) are going crazy all over the place shooting in the air with whatever guns they have.

1 May, Sunday

Another month is starting. Will it be the last month of suffering for our poor country? Today there were more strikes on the surrounding area. One of them we couldn't hear but it was really strong, it blew the windows open from the blast. Weird how it can be strong and yet soundless ...

6 May, Friday

No planes tonight, which is a bit strange. We have become accustomed to having them around, and it feels reassuring that things are moving forward. Yesterday, late at night, and this morning, we could hear some shooting, maybe due to some moves in the city.



... I just heard a big one. Windows blew open. This may be in the city; I wonder what they hit this time ...

15 May, Sunday

Tomorrow, the Hague court of law will accuse Gaddafi and two others (I guess his brother-in-law Abdullah Senussi and Gaddafi's favourite son, Saif) of crimes against humanity. I hope this will be enough to stop this bleeding and we can start breathing again.

16 May, Monday

A friend of mine phoned me this evening and when she was talking, she suddenly said 'My God they're gonna kill us!', and dropped the phone. I have to say that my first thought was that mercenaries had burst into her home as they do - they usually attack people's homes in big groups of about 20 guys to spread terror - but no, it wasn't that, just the sound of NATO's missiles. Her husband and her brother went on to the roof to check and saw the jets stationed, humming, right on top of their home. Then they shot two missiles.

19 May, Thursday

It seems that what happened yesterday night was more than 'just' some movement! We've seen videos of marches in the city or, I should say, in the suburbs. I couldn't recognise the streets being shown but it was quite a crowd walking out there. The boys were unarmed, shouting anti-Gaddafi slogans and pushing around the orange bins to use as drums. And, for a change, no one was killed.

27 May, Friday

Nearly the end of the month. I wish that all this could end now but it seems it will go on at least another one. We have to believe in that and we are all feeling that the end is coming. Now the citizens of Tripoli are becoming more and more antagonistic towards Gaddafi's forces but the only weapon we have at the moment is to hit and run.

... NATO's bombs whistle before they hit their targets, so now the boys start whistling when they hear the planes hovering around. They even use football horns, to the point that they are now forbidden and one could be arrested just because he or she has one in the car. They started arresting everyone with Internet connection!

1 June, Wednesday

Tonight we had some more NATO strikes, they sounded quite close this time, maybe around the Gypsum Gate in the Serraj area. My niece got frightened; she knows that we are not targets but I guess it is apprehension. This time I went onto the rooftop and could see the smoke and dust. I should have gone up earlier. I'm sure I would have seen something. How strange we've become: happy to be bombed and even asking for more.



14 June, Tuesday

On TV, I think it was the BBC, it was stated that a representative from the White House believed that the Libyan war could continue until September! He must be joking: four more months of this? I don't think so. I'm hoping to be able to do a bit of swimming in our free seashores and have a free Ramadan. So I'm just going to put that story into the recycle bin and forget about it.

22 June, Wednesday

We had some news about those wounded and killed in Nalut, in North Western Libya. One of the dead is my second cousin Sana's ex-husband. My first cousin Mounira's eldest son has been wounded, suffering burns and a broken leg, his friend too. The brother-in-law of my cousin Hanno woke up from a coma but he was in a really bad state, practically had his guts out from what they say (all hit by missiles). All this death is painful. What a loss, all these boys ... even more for the Berbers, as they are already so few. How long will this killing continue? As it is, Gaddafi did everything to reduce our numbers with the shocking state of medical care here in Libya.

26 June, Sunday

Is it already over 100 days since NATO began their work? This mess is still ongoing.

4 July, Monday

Went to meet the boys at O2, a café by the beach and one of the rare spaces where I feel comfortable reading and writing. They are in good spirits but there's not much news ... One of the boys told me a funny story ... A pro-Gaddafi guy stopped a car at one of the check-points, and saw that the driver had a laptop. The Gaddafi guy asked, 'Is this a Facebook?', to which the other answered 'no no, a Facebook is thicker and has an aerial', so he let him go.

6 July, Wednesday

The crowd wasn't bad at all in Benghazi. That huge space near the Ottoman camp, Kish Square, seemed almost as full as Tahrir Square during the revolution in Egypt. Still, the crowd was a bit disorganised, there was some pushing around the ladies. Education may help to make the sexes more comfortable around each other.

12 July, Tuesday

Misrata side, nine reported dead and some 35 wounded. When is this going to end? The number of our dead is rising and that is without counting the poor buggers who are fighting for Gaddafi. I feel a constant urge to cry but somehow I feel that I don't have the right and swallow it. I am comparatively safe at home, none of



my close family has died or disappeared, the ones who are out in Tunisia are fine and in a house rather than a tent. I feel so spoiled.

21 July, Thursday

We still have one more Friday before Ramadan. Will we be free for the fasting month? Hum. Maybe too optimistic, but you never know.

23 July, Saturday

Amy Winehouse died today, poor girl. I think it is a big loss for pop music.

24 July, Sunday

I've done an interpretation of Donatello's statue of David with Goliath's head at his feet. It's a fun one, still need to do some photos and work on it a bit to have a second little message.



Hadia Gana, *Donatello I*, 2011, still from video. Courtesy of the artist.

31 July, Sunday

Tomorrow is Ramadan ... May it be the last one with Gaddafi and may we have a free Eid!

August 3, Wednesday



We had no electricity today, and it finally came back at sunset, which made my niece Manni thankful. I worry about her being happy and thankful for small things as we have been forced to for 42 years! We need angry young men and women, who won't accept being twisted left and right and still made to feel grateful for the crumbs of human rights or shadows of achievement thrown at them.

4 August, Thursday

No light most of the day. The big change is that even the city centre had no power, which is unprecedented. My sister Zazia called her brother-in-law in Tripoli and told him that they had dinner out in the garden, not knowing what they had in their spoons. Later when my brother-in-law and his younger brother Salah went onto the roof they felt as if they were in a desert oasis, unable to see their own hands! He said that they could understand the city only when a car passed. Will it be the start?

6 August, Saturday

Mobile phone connections are slow and the coverage is mostly scarce these days but that isn't resulting from the power cuts. Gaddafi is trying to prevent people from connecting and, of course, trying to prevent the boys from organising themselves. I think Gaddafi's scared, because the boys are getting really close to Tripoli.

9 August, Tuesday

We hear gun shots all night as we have no sound pollution these days. But it appears that the boys came out in different areas of Tripoli, some died of course but as Gaddafi's forces 'clean up' after they kill, we can't be sure of the numbers.

11 August, Thursday

Everybody seems to be very optimistic about a close end. Walid, a student of mine, called me the other day telling me not to worry, that it would only be a matter of two or three days. I wish! The poor boy may be over-enthusiastic but it's good that someone is.

Another friend yesterday told me that it was close and that I should leave the country with my sister and family.

I remember when our boys first reached Green Square in Tripoli, Houda (an activist and one of my best friends) and I jumped about dancing and screaming, thinking that Gaddafi was done.

So now I prefer to go slow with my emotions ...

13 August, Saturday

It's getting really tight on Gaddafi these days, I don't want to sound too optimistic but it's as if I can smell it ...



Tripoli, Tripoli ... It is some weeks now that I haven't gone to the city centre. But I know that check-points are decreasing and the atmosphere is tense, as they know that they are targets even for NATO.

16 August, Tuesday

No electricity today since eight this morning. I feel blind, as we don't have fresh news and right now things are happening!

18 August, Thursday

It is the seventeenth day of Ramadan and it is being whispered around the streets that the tide is turning. If it's true, it would make for a symbolic connection to the Prophet Mohamed's victory in the Battle of Badr on the seventeenth day of Ramadan all those years ago.

Some say that the 20th day of Ramadan is going to be THE day. We'll see.

We heard a few strikes this afternoon and evening. A lot of NATO leaflets were dropped around the Siyahya area and in the city centre, mostly saying 'prepare yourselves for the last fight ... the 20th'.

20 August, Saturday

Today is the day the boys are supposed to open Tripoli. Yesterday Marwan, one of the boys, called telling me that my 'cousins were coming to visit' ... Another called saying that they were planning to come via the sea.

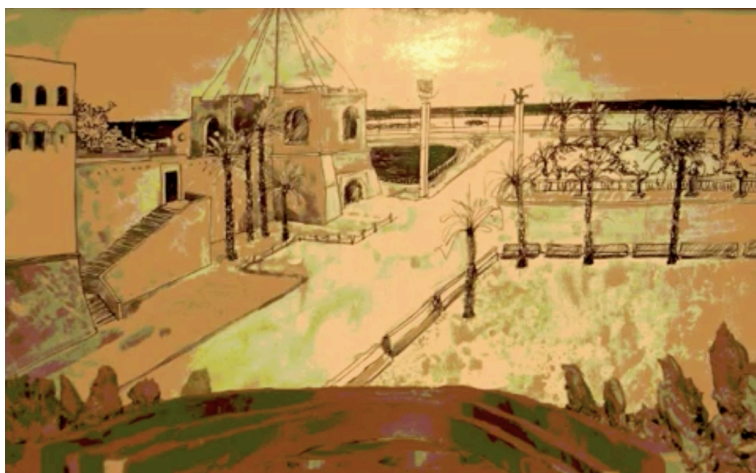
I am home and all is silent around me, I find myself wishing to be where the action is and the only thing that comforts me is that our turn will come soon, as the boys coming from Zawiya are now in the 27th camp just a few kilometres from us.

21 August, Sunday

I don't know from where to start or what to say or even what to feel. I am numb and my head is spinning ... News reports are flowing at such a rate that I forget a lot of them. All day we've been waiting for our mountain boys to arrive, there was no electricity as usual but the day felt even longer than normal because of the scarcity of news. We had some phone calls here and there, even if the lines were jammed by Gaddafi's people.

... The shooting became more intense and the dark came fast, so we could clearly see the red lights of the bullets in the sky and that they were all going in one direction. And we saw Gaddafi's forces fleeing, either on foot (some passed through our street but they were very few) or driving their fitted pick-up cars. When my cousin Youssef recognised our cars he started shouting 'Allaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah akbaaaaaar' ('God is

the greatest') and we also shouted as loud as we could all the anti-Gaddafi slogans we knew. The moment was just unbelievable; it felt like deliverance, what some call breaking the wall of fear ...



Hadia Gana, *Message II*, 2011, still from video. Courtesy of the artist.

22 August, Monday

... The cousins called, telling me that they were on *their* cousins' roof-top (with a great view onto the main street) to welcome our mountain boys, who were due to arrive. I joined them to do some filming and take some pictures. Like all normal girls, the cousins were welcoming our 'Touwar' (I think that's the first time I use this word but it's what we are calling the boys and it simply means 'revolutionaries') and checking them out! Even if they drove fast, they managed to look for the cute ones!

August 23, Tuesday

In the afternoon I went to my aunt's to chat and prepare the table for Ramadan breakfast when my cousin Shaaban told me that there were foreigners here to see me. I first thought that my brother had arrived and then that he was joking, as my brother has been in England all this time. But they really were foreigners, four journalists from Italy and one from Argentina who came across the Dheba border with my cousin Hmeddo's friends, who are with the mountain boys.

They entered as many others had these last months, without a visa and in need of a hotel. I haven't been out in weeks and have no idea about the hotel situation downtown or if the city is even safe, as I can't reach any of my friends there.

I offered them my house but warned them that the lights come and go as well as the phone line and the Internet. Again, they started asking me when the electricity would come back - in an hour? Tonight?



Tomorrow morning? Ha! If any of us knew that, we'd have slept better these last few weeks instead of dozing here and there just in case the electricity came back on. You learn to be patient when you are helpless.

24 August, Wednesday

After a long day doing bits and pieces helping out the journalists, I went to my aunt's house. I was tired but wanted to write, as I haven't been able to do so these last two days. As soon as I arrived, the cousins told me that some girls were planning to sing in the streets and so off we went to join them. We had a really nice time, some ten or 20 girls and their mothers singing non-stop anti-Gaddafi slogans and songs as loud as we could on our main crossroads.

25 August, Thursday

The four journalists left for the Corinthia Hotel to see their countrymen that were freed yesterday. The day before, they asked me if it was safe and I told them that it should be, because it was far from Gaddafi's Bab al-Aziziya compound, where there is still fighting, even though it seems that Gaddafi and his family have fled. Still, the journalists got caught in some gunfire and the cameraman wasn't too pleased.

27 August, Saturday

I'm not watching much TV and I feel a bit disconnected from all the travel between my house full of journalists and my aunt's home. But I think things are going better on the three major fronts at Sirte, Sabha and Ras Ejder, on the Tunisian border. My cousin Amor passed by yesterday afternoon to bring me some videos and photos that he shot in his area a few days ago when they liberated themselves and we talked about the future.

Now, a lot of people have discovered HOPE. Call it stupid, but I always had hope.

I talked about that with Amor, asking him to think about what his generation would like to have, small things that can be achieved quickly. Because, for the moment, all of us - and especially the boys who are fighting - have a clear aim that gives us an amazing energy. But once this aim is fulfilled, they may find themselves up in the air without wings or a parachute, finding nothing to do and wondering what all their friends died for.

31 August, Wednesday

Eid al-Fitr ... The first one Gaddafi-free! Let the reconstruction begin ...

2 September, Friday

One of the journalists left today... Later in the afternoon it was the women's march. Waaaa! I just hope this mood will last as long as it can! I was filming (usually women avoid the camera like the plague - even filming



a wedding in the family is a pain in the neck because everybody either hides or shouts at you to stop) and for the first time, women actually came in front of my camera to sing or shout a slogan.

3 September, Saturday

I went out around 11 this morning to take some photos of the scribbles on the city walls, as citizens are already starting to paint them and clean up the city. Some areas are more active than others and it shows - or maybe just more creative.

5 September, Monday

Today there was the first workshop organised by the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, a Swiss conflict mediation organisation set up in 1999, which aims to create or provide a platform for democratic discussion.

It started with some delay and a bit of stumbling but overall, it was fine. The first part, though, was boring and way too long. Two speakers were invited and stayed on the podium. To me, that is already a bad start. Democracy means we are all on the same level. Then they did their talk/lecture and called for dialogue but strangely enough, they always had the last word, even if it was to say that they didn't want to be patronising. They both seem to be good people but with all respect, that means nothing in politics.

Then we had the workshop. The aim was to trigger discussions among ten groups of people, resulting in a list of five things they were afraid of and five things they wished for post-Gaddafi. The major fear is of careerists taking advantage of the system to get to a position they don't deserve. The second was extremism (yes, even Muslims living in a 100 per cent Muslim country are afraid of Islamic extremism). The third was the black market for all the weapons still in the country. The rest of the workshop was about democratic discussion, stability after Gaddafi and so on ...

6 September, Tuesday

I went to a meeting with a human rights representative from the United Nations. It wasn't bad, after all. Not that it will change much but it was grouping some of the young people who were active in and out of Libya in the last few months, so I had a sense of who is around. Of course, you could feel that some wanted to show off their credentials, 'we were the first doing so and so' and this kind of stuff but overall, it was interesting.

7 September, Wednesday

Other meetings today ...

First, a meeting with Ali Moustafa, an artist and friend of my father's. We met at the café to reboot ideas and check who is doing what in the field of arts.



In my opinion, he is the one in Tripoli who knows all the artists and has an objective view of things. He is organising wall paintings around the city with different artists and young architects and planning to make enlarged paintings on building facades. That would give a nice kick to a lot of areas in the city.

Then, I dropped in on Lamia, a friend and architect, to meet with the group of young activists she is hosting in her office, as most of the groups have nowhere to meet. They are a nice mix, full of energy. It would be a huge shame not to use it.

This group wants to organise a 'liberation festival' in Tripoli once the city is fully free. The chief of the group is a young pediatric doctor. After a quick chat with him, they asked me to join them for a meeting and off we went. The meeting ended up being with the leader of the youth group of the National Transitional Council in Tripoli.

One main problem (and the reason I always had this arts and culture centre project in mind) is that they have no common place to go to for their meetings. Of course, the leader couldn't answer or respond to this demand, as he surely has no effective power for the moment and kept saying 'we are waiting for you to make the first move'. There came the idea to squat in the People's Hall, one of those places no one was allowed to enter and was just another expression of Gaddafi's disdain for the Libyan people. This building, which is right at the western door of Tripoli, was burnt at the beginning of the revolution.

After the last meeting, Lamia, Mohamed (one of the activists) and I went to check out the building. Not bad at all! Actually, it's perfect for a squat. One part of it is badly burnt but the main part is totally fine. Once outside, we looked at each other and decided that we would take it for the time being and spread the message among the youth groups. We've thought of a name; by adding one dot to a word, we changed its meaning entirely, from 'ka3at elsha3b' to 'ka3at elshaghab' ('People's hall' to the 'Cheeky hall'), as we all know how cheeky students can be! Then we started dreaming of a colorful facade.

9 September, Friday

Interpol has now officially printed the wanted posters for Gaddafi, his son Saif and brother-in-law and spy chief Abdullah Senussi. I hope the boys get them before any foreign force so that we have the right to judge them in Libya.

For the last hour, I've been hearing anti-aircraft fire. I go upstairs and sit down on the balcony to check where the bullets are coming from. I think that they are coming from Serraj side and even closer, right in our back street, with the red lights screaming over my home. I wonder what happened, it sounds like a fight but it could also be the boys getting too excited as today the gathering on the square was huge from what I've seen of my friend Hytem's pictures on Facebook.

A lot of those boys lived in terrible boredom before this revolution and are now hanging around back at square one. Some actually enjoyed the battles, as for them it was an adventure, a real-life SEGA game. Life has always been very cheap in Libya and at least there they could give their energy and their lives for some



glorious cause. They so strongly believe in the cause that Hmeddo told me that they didn't want to wear bullet-proof vests, saying, 'I come to fight and die as a martyr'.

12 September, Monday

Mr. Abdul Jalil, the leader of the National Transitional Council of Libya, gave his first speech on Martyrs' Square and I wasn't there to see it! They didn't really advertise it, maybe for safety reasons but also because it wasn't supposed to be a huge celebration as the country isn't yet completely free. What can I say ... Since the beginning, I've seen him as a father figure ...

His speech was good. He covered the worries we all have, saying for instance that 'we will not accept any extremism from either left or right in our country', gave in order of importance first the youth and then women, saying that they will have important roles in politics as well as in social and educational sectors ... I need to see it again but it was a touching speech and the crowd listened in silence. Well, not all the time but it's already a miracle that it managed to be quiet for most of it.

13 September, Tuesday

I had some meetings, mostly for the Tripoli liberation festival this morning. The activists are all Internet and Twitter freaks, just like the youths in Europe. Who said people are different? Us 'old youths' sometimes feel slow compared to them (and indeed we are) but we can still help to push them forward and find them places to stay, group and work.

I had a second meeting with the youth programme leader for the National Transitional Council about using the People's Hall for meetings. He seemed to be interested and asked me to present a file on it tomorrow. The weird thing is that he asked me to suggest some names of people who would be able to head up culture in Tripoli's transitional committee! Surely they have someone already?

Other than that, Azza, a friend and former colleague from the Islamic Arts and Crafts school, is back to taking care of *Morabbaat*, a magazine given to Libyan architecture and crafts. She's preparing a special issue dedicated to the revolution and asked me to write something. I'm not a professional writer (you may have noticed) but it's a pleasure to be part of the third issue, even if they only managed to produce issues zero and one, the number two being stuck somewhere in Lebanon. Why in Lebanon? Simple, we still don't have proper printing industries here in Libya and the private ones came into difficulty, as publishing was seen as a threat under Gaddafi. Plus, Lebanon is the printing Mecca of the Arab world. The bad luck for issue two is that it was due during the Lebanese crises last year ... Or was it before? Anyway, the magazine fell into lethargy all this time and is coming back now.

15 September, Thursday

Mr. Sarkozy and Mr. Cameron are here! The cream of the crop is in the city, between the Rixos and Corinthia hotels. I'm far from being cream but I happened to arrive just after they left and saw some of the



personalities, such as Mr. Shammam (a controversial figure but the media fight he conducted worked well, so good for him), Mr. Bani (the military spokesman), Mr. Fortia (the representative of Misrata) and last but not least, Mr. Al-Alagy (acting justice minister and the one looking after Gaddafi's file at the Hague) ... I had a meeting at the café and could see them going around the hotel hallways with all the bees buzzing around. Finally, finally, some normal people!

The one bad thing about having Mr. Sarkozy and Mr. Cameron come today is that my appointment with the interim minister of culture was dropped and I don't know when I'll be able to get another one as these days all the world is passing through (Turkey should be coming tomorrow and some Arab countries later this week).

18 September, Sunday

I had a morning meeting with some architectural students who want to help with Tripoli's festival. They are supposed to build the main city gates but have almost no time and less money. Salma, an art student and one of organisers of the festival, briefed them on what it is meant to be about. I gave them some basic ideas to start with and we began the discussions. These are always way too long in my point of view but I guess people feel a need to express themselves right now.

19 September, Monday

Morning appointment at O2 with Ali Moustafa, to talk about a book we want to make with photographs of the scribbles and drawings of the revolution. It should be an interesting one, a first for me but it's easy to work with him as we are both open to discussion and new ideas. I need to take some more photos. I already have hundreds but they need to be selected and sorted.

Right after that I met the architectural students in the garden where Tripoli's festival will take place, to double-check proportions and decide which ideas are best fit for purpose. We had a nice talk and ended up with four designs that we discussed later online. I think they should be interesting - if we manage to do them.

1 October, Saturday

After a seemingly calm Friday, today there were clashes in Nalut and Badr among anti-Gaddafi forces. Again, Gaddafi's people are causing infighting, unrest.

Today, one of my second grade cousins was killed by a sniper in the same area. Angry, Nalut's boys came back down for revenge, burning one or two houses. Mr. Abdul Jalil of course heard about these clashes and others in neighbouring cities and villages and gave a speech asking people to stop behaving as tribes, and impressing that the law is the only way to keep our revolution clean.

20 October, Thursday



It is 1:45 pm: they got Gaddafi! How? When - and where? Can we see any video of him, is there any proof? All these questions are banging around my head and I can't be happy, I am actually afraid to believe it ...

... The boys and NATO attacked the convoy and it seems that they got him ...

... A photo of Gaddafi's capture is doing the rounds on the news ... It looks like him but Photoshop can also make *me* his capturer...

... We are still waiting for Mr. Abdul Jalil to give a speech about this historic event. For the moment, we are all the same ... It is a moment so long-awaited that now it's here, we don't know how to react. First, we are still not sure if it's true and second, we simply can't believe it after so long and don't know how to express ourselves ...

... After eight long months of revolution, the 20th of October is the day. Two months ago, on the 20th of August, Tripoli was free. Now Gaddafi is dead ... And Libya is FREE.

23 October, Sunday

Mr. Abdul Jalil gave a speech proclaiming Libya a free country ... I am no longer in Libya but in Amsterdam with very limited Internet connection. I'm watching the French news channels, and it seems the only bit of his speech they are airing is where he says that Sharia will be the basis of our constitution.

After all these months of misery, stress and hope, and after the amazing show of will that the Libyan people mustered after 42 long years of oppressive dictatorship, we are still seen as people unable to find our own way. It took France 20 years to settle down after their revolution. I know that was some years ago and there was no oil or strategic financial deals to negotiate but still - cut us some slack!

25 October, Tuesday

I am aware that I haven't been very expressive about Gaddafi's death.

Hearing that he died killed quickly was, I have to say, disappointing, as I wanted him alive to be judged in court for what he did. But I was relieved to see and hear the boys shouting at him in those last moments and telling him what he should have heard all his life.

Gaddafi has been killed in his country, by his own people, and now the country can finally try to rebuild itself.



Hadia Gana, *Ripping Down Gaddafi's Flag*, 2011, still from video. Courtesy of the artist.

About the author

Hadia Gana was born in Tripoli in 1973, to a French mother and Libyan father. She first attended Tripoli's French Primary School, then joined a public Libyan school, before going on to study ceramics and glass-making at the faculty of arts and media at the University of Tripoli. She then travelled to Wales, where she got a Masters in Ceramics from the University of Wales Institute, Cardiff. She has taught arts at different levels, ranging from primary to university level. She was awarded a bursary and is planning to do a practice-based PhD in Amsterdam, the subject of which will be the creation of an art and discussion space in Libya. She plans to turn her family home in Tripoli into a cultural hub.